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WATER WONDERWAY: A HISTORY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA CANAL

by JAMES CALHOUN HUMES

Presented to the Lycoming Historical Society on January 23, 1964

Chapter I

THE JEALOUS CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Of all the state canals, none could equal the Pennsylvania Canal system for sheer imaginativeness. The Erie was the most successful, the Chesapeake and Ohio, the most scenic, and the Morris, the most hydraulically complex; but the Pennsylvania Canal system, in the age of canal mania, has the most bizarre of histories.

This mania had been caused by the patent success of the Erie Canal in New York State which was completed largely through the untiring efforts of the far-sighted DeWitt Clinton. Overnight Clinton's ditch had transformed New York City from a Hudson River market town to the nation's top seaport. The city that lost the most by this change was the nearby sister city of Philadelphia. Understandably, the citizens of Philadelphia were perturbed at the prospect of losing commerce and its concomitant advantages. At that time, Franklin's city was still the nation's most populous city as well as a cultural focal point.

By the early nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution was well under way in America and the stage coaches and mule caravans were not equal to its demands. Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky was calling for an American system of Federal subsidized internal improvements to connect the Northwest and Northeast. The American commercial interests were loath to watch the foreign port of New Orleans drain the trade from the recently acquired Northwest, separated from the East by the Appalachians.

In Pennsylvania, the newly constructed turnpike from Pittsburgh through the Allegheníes to Philadelphia had cut travelling time from twenty-five days to fifteen. But generally conditions had not changed much since the days of the Constitutional Convention when the forefathers had provided four months between the presidential election and the Presidential inauguration.

New York State had met the challenge of the Industrial Revolution by the completion of the Erie Canal in 1823, which perhaps, considering the times and conditions, was a greater achievement than the transcontinental railroad.. The 363 mile canal had reduced freight rates between Albany and New York from $100 to $9 a ton. The advantage to be reaped from the canal was quickly indicated by the fact that 3500 new commercial buildings were built in the city one year after the completion.

Baltimore, too, was concerned about its future commercial position. For some time, it had been enjoying the highly risky rafting trade down the Susquehanna River through the rapids at Conowingo Gap and onto the Chesapeake Bay. Now Baltimore, with the aid of lobbyists and sympathetic Representatives from central Pennsylvania counties, sought to persuade the Pennsylvania legislature to build a canal along the lower Susquehanna around the Conowingo Gap to make transportation to Baltimore more profitable.

They were not to succeed. Philadelphia was in the process of mobilizing the most effective pressure groups heretofore seen: The Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements in the Commonwealth. Founded in 1825, the Pennsylvania Improvement Society, as it was more often called, was laden with the respectability of Philadelphia's elite. They prepared a memorial to the State Legislature calling for the immediate construction of a Pennsylvania Canal through public money. These signed memorials which came from all parts of the Commonwealth in addition to a canal convention that represented 89 of the 110 Pennsylvania counties produced such powerful pressure that the legislative body was persuaded to set up a board of canal commissioners.

The Pennsylvania Improvement Society, however, did not find its lobbying task an easy one. There was vigorous opposition from the teamsters and the tavern keepers who found their way of life threatened. Especially in the southern tier of counties that bordered Maryland were these outcries from those farmers whose trade was oriented more towards Baltimore than Philadelphia. One of these farmers was a young State Leg-

islator named James Buchanan who was more articulate in exposing the prematurity and expenditure of such a canal project as well as the constitutionality of such a lobbying group as the Pennsylvania Improvement Society than he was to be later in assesssing the slavery problem as President.

But the Pennsylvania Improvement Society was not the first to see the advantages of an inland waterway in Pennsylvania. The Father of our Commonwealth, William Penn, had suggested a canal between the Susquehanna and Delaware in 1690. And the Father of our Country, when he set out from Philadelphia in 1791, to supress the Whiskey Rebellion in Southwestern Pennsylvania, was also looking the ground over as a possible canal route. He was accompanied by David Rittenhouse, the astronomer, who as a member of the American Philosophical Society, had helped to make America's first canal survey over the route between Middletown on the Susquehanna and Reading on the Schuylkill.

Chapter II
CANALS, CONSTRUCTION AND CORRUPTION

Under the new Canal Commission of Darlington, Scott and Patterson, a canal survey of Pennsylvania was undertaken. There were two obstacles in any inland waterway to Philadelphia. First there were the Allegheny Mountains to surmount; second, there was no natural water route from the Susquehanna to Philadelphia. But since it was the City of Brotherly Love that was directly responsible for the canal survey, she was not going to let herself be bypassed in a water route that might have more easily ended in Baltimore.

Thus, it was decided that the crude Conowingo Canal, the first built in Pennsylvania, was not really navigable. The 77 mile Union Canal from Middletown to Reading, which conceivably could have been a key link in a canal that would connect the Susquehanna to Philadelphia, was found to be too narrow. Furthermore, this Union Canal, built through lottery money through state authorization, had proved to be a leaky boat that needed continual bailing out.

Instead it was decided to build a railroad from the terminus of the canal at Columbia on the Susquehanna to Philadelphia, distance of 82 miles. The other obstacle was to be met by railroads, too. The Juniata and Conemaugh Rivers were not to be connected by a railroad that would climb 1,398 feet on the eastern side and 1,171 feet on the western slope. Although this railroad at Portage was not to be completed until 1834, it was one of the reasons why that justified calling the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Canal a "water wonderway". In negotiating the mountain, Canvass White, the brilliant engineer, planned a complex railroad line. Charles Dickens explains it in his *American Notes*:

> There are ten inclined planes; five ascending, and five descending; the carriages are dragged up the former and let slowly down the latter by means of stationary engines; the comparatively level spaces between being traversed by horses, and sometimes by engine power, as the case demands.

On the other side of the state, the railroad of Main Line of the Pennsylvania was to leave a lasting imprint. The suburban towns just outside of Philadelphia through which the old horse-drawn railroad ran is still called the Main Line. (It must be emphasized that the English George Stephenson, who launched his first steam engine railroad car in 1825, was still an unknown.)

The horse-drawn railroad car was used for the entire distance except a point just outside Philadelphia. There was an inclined plane of a mile in length on which several cars were pulled up the grade at once by an immense hawser, a stationary engine at the top being the motive power. From there the horses would be attached again.

Since this was the first state-owned railroad in the world, it had many precedents to make. At the inception it was regarded comparable to a canal or turnpike; it was a public highway upon which any one might put his own vehicle and operate it on payment of the tolls. Farmers became accustomed to putting their own cars on the single track line and thus brought competition to the state not only in hauling their own products, but in public transportation too. The resulting confusion was inevitable. The state first double-tracked the line and then in 1834 eliminated all horses and assumed operation of all the cars.

Thus, Philadelphia was able to tack itself onto the central arteries of the canal which followed the Susquehanna River from Columbia up to Amity Hall, north of Harrisburg, where it followed the Susquehanna's tributary, the Juniata, until it reached the Allegheny and Portage Railroad which connected to the Conemaugh River on the other side of the mountain.

It must be remembered that the canal boats towed by horses and mules did not, except rarely, navigate the perilously swift rivers themselves, but rather followed dredged-out back-water channels that paralled the river routes. The engineers who designed the channels were of necessity imported from New York State. Men like James Geddes and Nathan Roberts had participated in the construction of the Erie Canal. Thus, it was understandable that the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Canal would follow the general pattern of the successful Erie. The canals were forty feet wide at the top and twenty-eight feet at the bottom of this four-foot deep channel. But as the building of the railroads showed, the Pennsylvania Canal was going to tax the inventiveness of these engineers, far more than the topographically convenient Erie. In addition to thirty-seven viaducts and eight bridges, the Pennsylvania had one hundred and seventy five locks to seventy for the Erie. One of the great engineering triumphs was a 901 foot tunnel at Staple Bend, near Altoona, which at that time was the biggest in the world.

But if the engineers were imported from New York, the laborers, were imported in the main, from Ireland. The railroads then were not the first to exploit the cheap labor of these Celtic peasants. Since the Protestant Teutonic population of Pennsylvania and the Catholic Irish are innate opposites, it is only surprising that there were not more outbursts of violence in those areas where groups of pugnacious Irish were shunned by the resentful natives.

Whiskey, which was as much the staple of the Irish as rice was for the Chinese Coolies in the building of the Western Railroad, often served as a detonator in these fights. In all, though, the cost of this staple for this "cheap" labor was not a cheap item on the state financial ledger. Not only were thousands of dollars spent in the consumption of bottles, but thousands were spent on bottles that were never drunk much less seen. The paper cost of these articles added up to one of the biggest debaucheries of any state treasury heretofore witnessed which only goes to belie the widespread belief that political graft was mostly a phenomenon of the post-bellum days.

It was such shoddy shenanigans for canals whose construction had been inaugurated so auspiciously. Although the Pennsylvania Canal bill had been cleared by the Assembly, State Senate and the Governor, all in the month of February, it was decided, as was the custom in the inauguration of many state projects, to wait until the Fourth of July for breaking the ground at Harrisburg. July 4, 1826 was rather a special day in American history for, besides being the golden anniversary of the first Independence Day, it witnessed the death of the two founding fathers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Pennsylvania history also witnessed on that day the birth of her favorite bard, Stephen Foster.

With the passage of ten years and with the accumulation of a state deficit of over thirty million dollars, the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Canal was virtually completed. In the meantime, other branch lines such as the two canal lines of the West and North Branches of the Susquehanna had been built to placate the up-state legislators whose votes were needed on any appropriation bill. Thaddeus Stevens, a politician whose political craft has never been overrated, even had a branch line built to one his factories located in Adams County. But more than just plain "pork barrelling" it was graft that slowed up construction payments. Ficticious horses, as well as ficticious laborers were regularly listed on the public records. Just to take one example of malpractices used, the amount of money appropriated for the purchase of firewood jumped from $19,000 in 1831 to $110,000 the next year. Some of the stench began to reach the public nose not long after the canal was begun, but it was not until 1834 that the Lower House finally felt compelled to appoint an Assembly investigating committee. Their report was a virtual whitewash with the notable exception of a vigorous censure of an ex-Assemblyman who, since he wasn't returned to the body, was thus fair game for any criticism. The absence of any minority viewpoint in the report gives accurate indication of how bi-partisan the corruption was.

Chapter III
THE PENNY-WONDER CARAVANS

One might wonder how Dickens might have further embellished his account of Pennsylvania Canal travel had he been aware of the canal's colorful political history. As it is about the only thing that comes out unscathed in his treatment of canal boat life, the Susquehanna countryside is praised by Dickens. The English author likens the canal boat he rode in to " a caravan at a fair . . . in one of those locomotive museums of penny wonders".

Like many travellers, Dickens had contacted a travel agent, bought his ticket, and made his seat reservation; the cost would roughly average four cents a mile. The day of his departure, he would be aroused in the hours of early dawn by a horn from a stage-coach-bus which would take him and his luggage to the embarking station of the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad Mainline. Whent he railroad car reached Columbia on the lower Susquehanna, they would again transfer themselves onto a packet boat. The packet boat was the express mainliner reserved only for passengers. Its somewhat prosaic shape, which resembled a flat box on a flat barge, was easily compensated for by brilliant stripes of red, yellow and green. Dickens was most taken by the inside..

> I found suspended on either side of the cabin, three long tiers of hanging bookshelves . . . Looking with greater attention at these contrivances (wondering to find such literary preparations in such a place). I discovered on each shelf a microscopic sheet and blanket; then I began clearly to comprehend that the passengers were the library and that they were to be arranged edgewise on these shelves till morning.

After spending the night in such a way near Harrisburg, the packet would wind its way up the right bank of the Susquehanna until it met the Juniata fork west. At this point there was an immense tow bridge whose double-story allowed two-way traffic. The horses pulling the packets in both directions would thus cross the river by the tow-bridge while the packet would be drawn over a viaduct that spanned the river.

The waterway would then parallel the Juniata River until it met the Allegheny Mountains at Portage. Dickens found the ride over the mountains a shaking occasion:

> Occasionally the rails are laid upon the extreme verge of a giddy precipice; and looking from the carriage window, the traveller gazes sheer down, without a stone or scrap of fence between into the mountain depths below.

By the time Dickens went over the Alleghenies, travel had been more streamlined. John Dougherty had thought of the idea of making the packet or any other line cargo boat into two independent halves strapped together.. Then the railroads each half-boat could be taken over the mountain by itself; there would be no need for passengers to make the cumbersome transfer. His Reliable Boat Line, which started in 1836, probably was the one that serviced Dickens.

The line boats were the tracks of the waterways; these boats, hauled by mules generally charged about three and one-half cents per mile. Compared to the eighteen and one-half cent rate in the days of river rafting in Durham barges, this was a great reduction. For their work, steersmen were usually paid forty dollars a week; bowsmen were paid half of that and cooks, half the pay of the bowsmen. Passengers would also utilize these line boats in interior traveling. Like the mail trains, rates were low, but rates of speed even lower.

Canal travel even had its own version of stage-coach hold-ups. It was the custom of some water highway marauders to board from bridges under which the line boats passed.

After robbing the passengers of their belongings, they would then hop the next convenient bridge. Immigrants were considered especially good sport for these hijackers. Among the worst of these types were the Schuylkill Rangers, a professional team that operated near Lebanon and Pottsville.

Stealing was not just confined to the thugs. Many canal line boaters were not above snaring a plump chicken from one of the farms bordering the waterway. In a sort of nineteenth century protection racket, some farmers would have a row of corn or a row of apple trees right next to the canal.

With this sort of atmosphere, it is understandable why canallers were picked more for their fighting ability than their seamanship. Rivalry between boats led to hard races to be the first through the lock. Sometimes tow lines were cut in the struggle.

Towpath walkers watched for such lawlessness. These men would fine a steersman ten dollars for speeding three miles per hour or over. They would also check the conditions of the canal banks, which were natural havens for animals like muskrats and would, when necessary, call in a rescue boat for repairs.

But by the end of the nineteenth century, canal life had become pretty tame. The ways of the old water shanty people were now considered quaint; one indication that this frontier life had been conquered by American women was the sight of the boat windows where neat curtains framed a pot of geraniums.

Chapter IV
IRON HORSE ON THE TOWPATHS

But the Pennsylvania Canal seems to have passed from rollicking youth to bucolic old age without an intervening stage. Hardly was the Main Line completed in 1836 before it became obsolescent; the canal that was to be Pennsylvania's bread-winner became instead a financial burden.

It was a sad ending for a story that began with unbounded enthusiasm. The two decades following the war of 1812 had witnessed an unprecedented swell of prosperity. The Federal Government had paid off the national debt and had to distribute a surplus in the national treasury to the State governments. With that event it was thought nothing untoward could happen; it seemed to strengthen the popular belief that the millenium had come.

In this spirit of optimism, Pennsylvanians thought the canal would not only bring unparalleled wealth through the expanded commerce but that the canal revenues would pay for all the State government expenses.

The canal mania played a central role in the third and fourth decades of that century in a spending orgy that carried with it the inevitable curses of speculation, inflation and financial legerdemain.

In 1837 the bubble burst; a flimsy banking system underneath an increasing load of speculative borrowing collapsed. Worst hit of the eastern states was Pennsylvania; suddenly she found herself with a state debt close to 35 million and with not enough revenue from the canals to even come in sight of paying the interest on the debt. The panic of 1837 forced her to suspend her specie payments and she had to pay her interest payments for that year and the two succeeding ones in paper money. The resulting inflation caused her bonds to plumet. On February 1, 1840, Pennsylvania was forced to default in the payment of interest; meanwhile her debt was mounting close to 50 million.

The most revenue the Pennsylvania Canal could produce was $700,000. Although its lanes were kept busy, it was a financial disaster. To keep pace with the competitive Erie, it had to reduce rates to uneconomic levels.

But the real tragedy was that the Pennsylvania Canal, after eleven years, had been consumed, and after millions had been spent, found itself upon completion already outmoded.

Railroading, with its advantages of flexibility and speed, was proving to be a far more convenient means of transportation in Pennsylvania. As far back as 1829, a chartered railroad from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh was making faster time over the hilly terrain than was the paralled waterway through all the locks.

There were some Pennsylvanians who foresaw those advantages while the canal was being authorized. George Strickland, who was sent by the Pennsylvania Improvement Society to England to study the canal system, sent back an endorsement for Stephenson's Stockton and Darlington steam engine railroad in 1825. The Society foolishly disregarded his report in their preparation of the memorial. Even in Harrisburg the Society found opposition from John Stevens, a horse-operated railroad enthusiast who was lobbying for a state charter. It was his railroad that got the charter from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh in 1829.

But most Pennsylvanians thought that the new steam engines on rails would cause fires, create a big business monoply, and be too expensive to maintain especially during the snowy Pennsylvania winters. Furthermore, the railroad cars could not be a moving camp of soldiers like the canal

boats could in time of war. But the fact that ice was a greater hazard to canals than snow was to railroads, the canal system was too expensive to be economical.

The Pennsylvania Canal cost about $25,000 per mile while railroads never cost over $15,000 per mile and seldom that much, while branch lines could be constructed for as little as $600 per mile.

It is hard to say how many miles of canal the Pennsylvania State Government owned. Probably the high point was in 1840 when it owned about 606 miles. Close to half of this was the Main Line division excluding the railroad divisions of 276 miles. Next was the North Branch and the West Branch Divisions of 239 miles. In addition, there was the 31 mile Beaver Division and the 60 mile Delaware Division.

After 1840, very few miles of new canal work was built. At the same time, the country was beginning the launching of the greatest railroad-building period the country had ever known. In 1846, the State chartered the Pennsylvania Railroad to build a route from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. Although governors declared that the State would never sell its public works, it was obvious that the signing of the charter was like signing the death warrant for the canal.

Not only did the new railroad select Philadelphia and Pittsburgh for its terminals, but it actually paralleled the main canal up the Juniata River and down the Conemaugh for that was the only logical route for such a line.

By 1854, the western route was completed and the route immediately began to cut heavily into the canal's business. That very year, the Governor was compelled to ask for sealed bids for the purchase of the main canal. Not for three years were there any bids; then the dreaded rival, the Pennsylvania Railroad bought it out for $7,500.00. The Pennsylvania Railroad had already taken over the Columbia and Portage Railroads connecting the canals; when the State government attempted to lease the canal to the Pennsylvania Railroad for 999 years was declared illegal by the State Supreme Court, the purchase of the canal was inevitable. The profit margin for the Pennsylvania Canal in that last year before the sale was $62,100 which hardly was enough to pay a bit of the yearly interest.

After spending over $65,000,000 on canal works, the State government started to terminate her interest in the waterway system. To keep abreast of New York State's Erie in a desperate race to maintain her declining commercial prestige, she had spent more than any other state. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania's mountains were topographically unsuitable for a state-wide canal, and she had begun too late. Her late start meant she had to pay at inflationary levels. Even then competent and honest political administration might have rendered the Main Line of the canal a fair return to the taxpayers.. But when, after years of boondoggling, pork-barrelling, and corruption, the costs increased and the completion was delayed, the Pennsylvania Canal became an obsolescent economic failure.

Chapter V
CONCLUSION

Moreover, the Grand Canal of Pennsylvania, despite a busy demand, never proved to be successful as a freight carrier. The frequent locks and the mountains caused the water lanes to be clogged to such an extent that it could never handle the volume of traffic that the more level Erie could, even with New York State's longer winters. With the lockage of the Pennsylvania Canal nearly four times that of the Erie, many Philadelphia businessmen, much to the embarrassment of the State Legislators, found it more profitable to ship their west-bound goods to New York and then onto the Erie.

Nevertheless, the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Canal remained the most ambitious and most extensive State enterprise yet undertaken. Although the 606 miles of the Canal were not a success, it was not without its lasting influences. It was far more than just a skeletal outline for the coming railroads.

The statewide waterway system, connecting to the West, allowed Philadelphia to maintain her commercial prestige among the country's biggest cities. Without the, canal, New York with the Erie or one of Gulf Coast cities like New Orleans with the Mississippi River, might have drained trade away at Philadelphia's expense.

The canal project brought hoards of immigrants like the Irish to the country and also provided the means of transportation for them to new homesteads away from the seaports. In the same way the canal had much to do with the peopling of Yankee stock in the Midwest. It will never be known how influential the canal was in helping to cement the ties between the Northeast and Northwest that was to be the winning alliance in the Civil War.

The canal was also responsible for populating the hinterlands of the state. Middle-sized cities like Johnstown and Williamsport were almost non-existant until the commerce of the canal made them important centers. Likewise, factories began to spring up in the interior now that they had avenues for their products.

Thus, on balance, it may be said that the Pennsylvania Canal built up the interior of the Commonwealth and afforded its mineral and agricultural resources an outlet which allowed Pennsylvanians to pay heavy taxes, but prosper as well.

BEULLAH LAND

By CLARK B. KAHLER

A true account of an Old Circuit Rider, and the effect he left upon a lumbering community. The narrative contains human interest, plus a bit of religious historic record.

To most people, "Buehhah Land" is a well known old hymn, which is sung in many churches today. However, in the northern part of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, there is really a portion of mountain land bearing the name of Buellah Land. How this area acquired the name is indeed very interesting; and shows the lasting effect that an old circuit rider could have upon a mountain people.

Years ago, this particular country was a very busy lumbering operation, where millions of feet of pine and hemlock timber were cut from the mountains. A large crew were engaged at the task, so on top of the mountain a small lumber settlement developed. At the time it was known as The Barrens, for aside from a farm or two, it was a vast timbered area, and a lumber operation.

The houses were the regular rough board kind, of a temporary nature, for they were only to last as long as the timber held out. The main building was that of the Boarding House, where the lumbermen ate and slept, who did not have families with them. Another small building served as the school house, where the children went to learn their three R's.

Although the little settlement did not have a church, they still read the Bible and were a God-fearing and respectable people. Now and then they were visited by a Circuit Rider, who traveled into the areas, where he conducted services. He was always welcomed, and these people looked forward to his coming.

It was on one such occasion that the area acquired its name. The Circuit Rider, an old man with a white beard and a wide brim hat, rode astride his old, familiar horse; and was making his call. It was a bitter cold winter day; while the roads and traveling were bad with the ice and snow. As he rode up the narrow lumber road, they could hear him singing to himself, "Buellah Land, Sweet Buellah Land". Many of the men stopped their cutting for a moment and listened as he sang that beautiful hymn. They knew he would bring them news from the outside and hold a service for them that night.

That night in the camp lobby, the Circuit Rider was asked to conduct a service, which he obligingly did. Taking his much worn Bible, he read to them from the Scriptures and then made a few prayers. At hymn time they requested him to sing again his favorite hymn, "Buellah Land", but this time all joined in the singing. After closing his service with a blessing upon everyone, the old gentleman retired to a lumberman's bunk.

The next morning he departed from the camp, in a terrible snow storm, headed for Blackwell, a small lumber town about ten miles away. There he was expected by the Blackwell Family, and supposed to conduct a service in their home that evening.

Later that day, the people at Cedar Run, a town at the foot of the mountain, found his horse riderless, which they recognized

and stabled it. But when the Circuit Rider did not appear; they became alarmed and sent a rider to The Barrens to make inquiry there.

They soon realized that something must have happened to the old gentleman, so immediately started to search for him. At last he was found unconscious, at the bottom of a steep ravine below the road. He was tenderly placed across a horse and taken to Blackwell, where they summoned the doctor. Due to exposure and his age, his condition was critical, and he died the following day, at the home of the Blackwell Family. The news of his death was soon passed along to The Barrens and the towns that he had visited. Work ceased in the woods, while some of the lumbermen took the task of making a crude pine coffin and headboard, others prepared the grave, in the Blackwell Cemetery.

The burial service was simple but touching, and was conducted by a lumberman. Taking the Circuit Rider's Bible, which was found in his saddlebag, he read a part of Scripture and made a prayer. As they gathered around his grave, the leader asked them to sing a hymn. They selected "Beullah Land", his favorite, which he had sung at his last service in The Barrens.

Before departing from his grave, it was decided to change the name of The Barrens to that of Buellah Land, in honor and memory of the Old Circuit Rider, whom they all loved. So it has been known from that time.

Today the settlement has disappeared, the forest recut,' the farms abandoned from cultivation; and only hunting cabins remain. Here still is a beautiful area of mountain country, filled with game and wildlife of many kinds.

God, through the aid of Mother Nature, has erased many scars left upon the area. Saws and axes are seldom heard to break the stillness. Beautiful white birches grow everywhere, together with the aspins and pretty oak trees. Only one thing from the past still remains, and that is the beautiful honor to the memory of the Old Circuit Rider, the name of Buellah Land.

SOME THINGS FROM THE PAST

Information compiled from various sources by Mr. Carlton E. Fink

The boys in blue trained on the green which is now Diamond Square.

On October 26th, 1785, the land, on which Jaysburg was located, was granted to William Paul for district No. 1 of the new purchase, which in the survey was called Pleasant Grove. Paul sold his land to Abraham Latcha. After his death Jacob Latcha, his eldest son, secured the interests of the other heirs and had a town laid out early in 1794. He called it Jaysburg in honor of John Jay, then a prominent American statesman and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He named the streets Water, 2nd., 3rd., 4th., 5th., and Market and Queen. What is now West Fourth Street in Newberry was then Market Street. Queen Street still bears its name.

When the land proprietors of Jaysburg, Newberry, and Williamsport were contesting for the location of the seat of Lycoming County about to be organized, it was taken for granted that Jaysburg would be the county seat and Jacob Latchta erected a log and plank house and jail. This building stood a few feet to the rear of where the Winter home on Water Street stands, which was then occupied by Thomas Caldwell, and which is still standing (1949) and is the oldest house in Williamsport. The first commissioners were sworn into office in this house December 18th, 1795. The first and second terms of court were held in the Caldwell home, and the third term was held in the building that had already been erected by Jacob Latcha for the county jail where the court records and county officials held forth until the completion of our present court house about the years 1805 or 1806.

John Dunlap ran a tavern in Jaysburg, and it was here that a messenger from Northumberland stopped on his way to testify against Williamsport in the proceedings as to the proper place to locate

the County Seat. In the morning it was found that his saddle bags had been cut open and his official documents stolen. It was believed that these were the papers that would eventually have given Jaysburg the county seat. Lycoming County was organized on April 13, 1795.

September 22, 1798, Jacob Latcha conveyed a lot for five shillings to John Cummins and John Stewart, trustees, for an English school house. The nominal price of the lot bound the trustees to the specified nationality of the school to be taught. Among the early settlers were the Updegraffs who were Hollanders, prosperous old settlers and of sterling character, and not on good terms with the town boomers, They settled on Long Reach and did not want a town so close to them. They wanted their children taught in Dutch. The German families wanted their children taught in high German. The Scotch and Irish proposed to have their children instructed in the English catechism. As the latter were the prompters of the town they carried their point and the school house was built, though very little used owing to the early decadence of the settlement. Updegraffs then built their own school house which was of log construction and was built on the Derick Updegraff farm. It is not known for sure in what year it was built but it burned down in 1861, when another Long Reach school was built.

After Jaysburg lost the county seat all activities centered on the Sutton plot which was already laid out in the building lots. Toady Clark built a log house near the present site of the Bank of Newberry. A family named Bastian lived in one end, the other end was used as a school room. The first teacher was Rachel Stevenson. This building stood idle for a long time in the early 1870's and it was set afire and burned down.

The second house to be built on the Sutton plot in Newberry was one built by Reynolds and Teeple and was later purchased by Alex Wallace. This agreement was dated November, 1796, between David Reynolds and John Teeple on the one part, and Alexander Wallace on the other part, witnesseth that the said Reynolds and Teeple both bargained and sold to said Wallace a certain house and lot in Newberry town, now in the possession of the said Reynolds and Teeple, with a stable and one half acre of land, with a still house erected on said land, which the said Wallace is to hold at the praisement of two men to be chosen by the said parties against the first day of June insuring the date thereof, for which the said Wallace is to pay the said Reynolds and Teeple twenty-five pounds in hand before possession is given, and twenty-five pounds against the first of January, 1707, and three hundred and thirty three gallons of merchantable whiskey against the first day of April, 1798, and the said Reynolds and Teeple is to have the use of the kitchen and one room in the dwelling house until the first day of June next. The aforesaid still house and well is to be appraised separately by itself, which the said Wallace is to pay besides the aforesaid sum, and to the true performance of the above articles the parties both do bind themselves, and their heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns the parcels of five hundred pounds, lawful money of the state aforesaid, signed, witnessed, and dated June 1, 1778.

In 1795 George Sloan purchased land opposite the house mentioned and erected a log building for a hotel which is still standing and is the oldest hotel in Williamsport, the "Newberry Hotel." He had the custom of nearly all the old settlers and did a fair trade. Nearly every old person must have their gill of rum or whiskey, some three times daily. Pounds, shilling and pence were the financial basis. Sloan would have weaving done for his customers and all put it on their bill. At one time the ledger of accounts was in the possession of Mr. Oberfell, a later proprietor, and from which this information was taken. Its location today is unknown.

Jaysburg in the 80's was still the same Jaysburg. The old families and their descendents stayed on the ground. The life of those days was comparatively simple compared with today. The town was slow, she could boast of but three industries, the Dodge and Fesslers Saw Mill, the Susquehanna Boom, and the Mosser's Tannery. The Catawissa Railroad, now the Reading, and the Jersey Shore, Pine Creek and Buffalo Railroad, now the New York Central, were not here until 1883. The tannery operated the

year round. In the fall when the mills and the boom suspended operations, a majority of the men would migrate to the woods where they would cut, skid logs, or peel bark and when the first spring freshit would come they would roll the logs into the small streams to be floated down to the river and thence to the boom. In the late fall many of the men would husk corn. They husked so many bushels for so many bushels in return, and this gave them feed for their hogs. Most kept at least two of them. To convey the activity of the town before the coming of the lumber days, as well as to show the lines of industry then existing, I will give you the following occupations; Coopers, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, tailors, saddlers, canoe makers, potters, clock makers and repairmen, and dressmakers. Betsy Rannels, who lived in Jaysburg, was the leading dressmaker. At Antesfort there lived one Mary Anderson, a bright young girl, whose parents wanted her to learn the trade. One day she was loaded on a raft together with a young heifer, and floated down the river to the home of Betsy Rannels for six months apprenticeship. The heifer was the pay for her board and instruction. On another occasion Colonel William McMeen, one of the pioneer settlers on the Long Reach who also was river commissioner, had a business trip which would take him down the river to Harrisburg. He called on John Murphy, who was the tailor, and who lived on the spot where the old Jackson School stood, and was measured for a new pair of pants. Murphy was a great talker and began to talk about his trade. He had a very attractive girl who gave great admiration for McMeen. The talk and the making of the pants continued apace until nearly daylight the following morning when McMeen arose to leave. Murphy said, "Now Mr. McMeen here is your pants finished and all ready for you to wear." He had promised to have them ready early that morning.

John Austin, John Reighard and William Potter were the shoemakers. They traveled from house to house and shod the families once a year. Each member got a pair if it was necessary. These men carried their own lasts of various sizes, made their own wooden pegs and worked for board and fifty cents a day.

Newberry's advancement was slow until the coming of the lumber industry about the year 1850. The Dodge, James and Stokes mills were erected about the year 1864 and gave Newberry a prestige enjoyed by few places. There can be no doubt that the erection of the Susquehanna Boom aided immeasurably to the development of the lumber industry throughout the entire West Branch Valley. This boom built for the storing of a vast number of logs from year to year, and holding them securely, preparatory to the manufacture into lumber at the various mills, certainly has a history well worth preserving for the future generations. Prior to the coming of the railroads all lumber was moved via the West Branch Canal. The loading dock was at the foot of Arch Street, where once a ferry plied across the river. The need for providing facilities to reach the large number of sawmills that lined the river bank resulted in the building of the Lumber Branch Railroad, in 1864. The lumber industry that gave Williamsport the name of the Lumber or Saw Dust City has moved to the Northwest and Canada. The day of the canal has passed. It has given way to more modern ways of transportation. Wood as a material for many products is being replaced by metal and plastics. The possibilities of the future are too great to contemplate.

Never again shall our citizens be able to walk on the boardwalks that former citizens once tread. Never again will be the sound of the calked boots on them. Those who worked on the boom, called boom rats have passed to their reward. Their boisterous and hearty laughter and their antics as the lumbermen moved about our city have gone never to be replaced. Their weathered skin and picturesque dress have alike disappeared.

In 1850 Williamsport was a sleepy village of 1,615 people. In 1860 it was the lumber capital of the continent, with a population of 5,664. Lumber made more millionaires, in proportion to the population, than in any other American city.

It is generally believed that Roland Hill built the first saw mill on Lycoming Creek in 1793. Six years later, Samuel Torbett erected a mill on Bottle Run, and Thomas Caldwell, spoken of earlier, attached a sawmill to his gristmill on the same creek. These early mills were powered by water. The up and down saws powered by water were the direct successors of the old pit saw, a common cross-cut with one man in the pit and another on top of the log furnishing the power. Another inovation was the first steam driven sawmill which was introduced by Peter Tinsman, January 1, 1852. Then with the advent of the steam mill came the circular saw. When the band saw was introduced it was a big step forward. In 1836, Williamsport's first saw mill was built at the foot of Locust Street. It was powered by water and had four "up and down saws". It was called the "Big Water Mill." One of the most influential men in the development of the lumber industry on the West Branch was Major James H. Perkins, born in 1803 in New Hampshire, who came to Williamsport in 1845. He bought the Big Water Mill, and armed with capital, business experience, and plenty of energy, soon demonstrated that the lumber industry had a brilliant future. He sold this mill and built one operated by steam at Duboistown, which he operated for fourteen years.

When the lumber became exhausted in the vicinity of Williamsport, a cheap method of transportation of the logs from a distance had to be found. There were millions of trees, both white pine and hemlock, farther up the river. The logical way to get them to the mills was by the river and the streams that ran into it. There had to be something to hold them until the mills could cut them.

To solve this problem, Major Perkins put into operation a device that was to revolutionize the lumber industry. The boom consisted of a chain of logs stretched diagonally across the river. At its height, the boom extended from the river opposite Williamsport to Linden, a distance of six miles, and was capable of holding 3,000,000 board feet of logs at one time.

At the peak of operation there were some thirty great sawmills in Williamsport. The tanbark industry, which was so important at one time that hemlock trees were cut, peeled of their bark and allowed to lay and rot away. After the trees had been cut the state took most of the forests for back taxes.

On June 8, 1909 the last log was rafted out of the boom. Christian Haist, together with his crew of men knew that their work as river men had come to an end, they had cuffed their last log and that they could put away their canthooks and their calked shoes and that the work they had been doing would soon be but a memory.

Just before one o'clock on the afternoon of December 17, 1919, watchers on the bank of the mill pond near the Williamsport Mill of the Central Pennsylvania Lumber Company saw a maple log encased in ice and snow, guided by the canthook of that veteran lumberman, Henry Decker, approach the slip. Slowly, almost reluctantly it seemed, this log slipped through the water almost as if it were conscious of its role in the drama of the end of the Williamsport lumber industry. As the log reached the slip, it was bitten into by the sharp teeth of the chain. D. L. (Tippy) Davis, another veteran lumberman, guided the log onto the skids where it was seized by the clamps of the huge carrier and whirled back and forth past the big band saw. Quickly the maple log was sawed into two inch planks. As the sharp saw passed through the last piece of the log, William (Micky) Wilson, who was in charge of the saw, knew that the last log in the work of the Williamsport Mill had now been cut. He knew also that his work and the work of the lumber men was done here. The shutting down of the mill marked the final chapter in Williamsport's remarkable industry.

Gone were the majestic forests of pine and hemlock. Gone are the men of those days, sturdy and true, strong in their beliefs, their likes and dislikes, yet very fine men withal in the best sense. Out of the pictures have passed those unique characters of the back woods and the river front. Into the limbo of the past have gone the raftsmen with their coon skin caps and picturesque shirts. Even the paths trodden by their feet, as they walked their weary way back to the starting point, have disappeared. Their folk talks and songs are no longer known or sung. But the history of those days of the logs and boom, these men and their doings are an important point in the annals of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, as much as an ocean liner is to the tale of the oceans.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE LOYALSOCK

By DR. LLOYD E. WURSTER

A number of years ago Mr. George Kohler, who lives just above Loyalsockville, gave me a cross section of a large hemlock log which had been cut from the Loyalsock some years previously. This I planned to have finished and use as a table top since it showed the yearly growth rings very distinctly and I felt would be of historic interest. There were four hundred and sixty-two growth rings which meant that this tree had started to grow in the Loyalsock Valley, about the time that Columbus discovered America. Let us try to visualize what the Loyalsock Valley was like at that time. The valley was covered with a dense growth of virgin pine and hemlock, and the early lumbermen stated that these trees were so high and so dense that the sunlight seldom penetrated to the ground. The only inhabitants of course were the Indians.

At the mouth of the Loyalsock on the east side of the stream was a quite large Indian village called Otstuagy. I have quite a few Indian artifacts which were found at Barbours just east of the mouth of Plunkett's Creek, indicating that at one time there must have been an Indian settlement or camping ground at this point. Many artifacts have also been found on the flat land at the present site of Hillsgrove indicating that there must have been a village at that place. At the junction of the little Loyalsock and big Loyalsock where Forksville now stands, a considerable number of artifacts along with pottery were found in the early days. This would indicate that a village must have existed at this point. There is no record of any main Indian path traversing the Loyalsock Valley.

The Sheshequin Trail crossed the mountain through the Loyalsock Gap from White Deer Valley and crossed the river near the mouth of the Loyalsock. It then traversed west and north up Miller's Run and across the mountain into the Lycoming Creek Valley near the village of Bodines.

It might be well to mention the Indian Nations and tribes that occupied this area in the early days. The five nations occupied most of the southern New York State and these tribes were of the Iroquoian Nation.

The Algonquian family inhabited a territory almost completely surrounding that of the northern Iroquois. A sub-division of this nation called the Delawares occupied this part of what is now Pennsylvania. This confederacy was composed of three principal tribes among which was the Munsee or Wolf tribe which was the only one of the Delaware group who lived in our area. Most of the Indians living in the West Branch Valley at the time of the first white explorations were Munsees. They had villages at the mouth of the Loyalsock Creek, at the present site of Newberry and at Linden. They were, however, driven out by the Iroquois and went westward into what is now Ohio.

After the Delawares were driven out, the Iroquois used this area chiefly for hunting and fishing and during the Revolutionary War they allied themselves with the British and made many bloody forays into Lycoming County.

Early historical records state that during the French and Indian Wars in 1756, a rather large body of French and Indians came down the West Branch Valley from the western part of Pennsylvania which was then held by the French and stopped at the mouth of Loyalsock Creek. There the main body camped and sent some French soldiers and Indians through the Loyalsock Gap down the river to do some scouting around Fort Augusta in an effort to determine whether it might be possible for the French and Indians to capture the fort and extend the French influence into this part of the country. This bunch returned after their investigation and reported to the main body that it would be impossible to take the fort because it was too strong. They then decided to return. They had four small brass cannons which they had brought down the river on rafts but found it was impossible to take them along and therefore they dumped these cannons into a deep hole at the mouth of the Loyalsock which has been called The Cannon Mouth to this day.

EARLY EXPLORERS AND SETTLERS

No one knows who was the first white man to visit Lycoming County. There is a possibility that Etienne Brule, who was a soldier serving with Champlain may have passed through the West Branch Valley about 1615.. It was not until approximately one hundred and twenty years after this that the next European passed through Lycoming in 1737 while on a mission for the Provincial Government of Pennsylvania to Onandagwa, New York, the capital of the six nations, Conrad Weiser traveled through the West Branch Valley, accompanied by Shikellamy, an Indian chief, who later became vice-king of the six nations. It was said he traveled up the Susquehanna River to a point west of the present borough of Montoursville. They stopped at the Indian village of Ostuagy and then followed the Sheshequin Trail and crossed over to Lycoming Creek and from thence Northward to New York State. Wiser made many later trips through this region in the capacity of guide and emissary for the Provincial Government.

Five years after Wiser's journey up the West Branch, Count Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf, a Moravian missionary came to this county. He was accompanied by his daughter, Benigna, Conrad Wiser, Anna Nitchman, Jay Martin Mack and two friendly Indians. They came up as far as the Indian village at the mouth of the Loyalsock.

Zinzendorf was followed by other missionaries including Bishop Augustus Gottlieb Spangenberg, David Zeisberger, David Brainard, and Walt Mack. These missionaries came to convert the Indians to Christianity and they were highly successful. Chief Shikellimy became a convert and adhered strictly to the beliefs of Christianity the remainder of his life.

At the Indian village of Otstuagy at the mouth of the Loyalsock Creek, they found a French woman, Madam Montour. Few persons so greatly effected the fortunes of white men, of this section, of the state, as this famous woman and her son Andrew. She is supposed to have been born in Canada, a daughter of a French Governor. In 1694 when she was ten years of age, her father was killed in a battle with the five nations and she was captured and adopted by the Indians.

Because of her knowledge of French, English, and the various Indian dialects, her services as interpreter at treaties were extremely valuable to Provincial authorities. Her first appearance as an interpreter was at a conference between Sachens of Six Nations and Robert Hunter, British Governor of New York. The English and Indians alike had confidence in her ability and integrity.

In 1702, Madam Montour married Corondo Wans alias Robert Hunter, an Oneida chief. They settled at Otstuagy sometime prior to 1727. Her husband was killed in a battle with the Catawbas in the Spring of 1729. They had three children: Andrew, Louis and Margaret. Louis, an interpreter and friend of the whites, was killed during the French and Indian War. Margaret, generally known as French Margaret, ruled a village at the mouth of Lycoming Creek. This was called "French Margaret's Town." She prohibited the use of intoxicants in her realm, probably the first recorded case of enforced prohibition in the United States. Margaret's eldest daughter, Esther, frequently called Queen Esther, resided at Tioga Point, Bradford County, Pa., at the time the Indians attacked the Wyoming settlers. It is said that she led the Indians in the Wyoming Massacre of July 3, 1778, one of the most brutal slaughters in the frontier history of the state. It is thought that Madam Montour died between 1745 and 1748. Her son Andrew became a leading character in the colonial drama being enacted at that time.

Andrew, whose Indian name was Sat-tel-ihu, also became famous as an interpreter, guide and advisor to the Indian tribes in the eastern part of the country.

Andrew Montour was married twice. His first wife was the grand-daughter of Al-lum-ma-pees, a Delaware chief. They had one son, John and a daughter, Mary Magdaline. Andrew also was the father of a son, Nicholas, by a second marriage. John Montour was born in 1744. He was educated at the Philadelphia Academy and served as a captain in the Dunmore World War. After leaving the West Branch, Andrew received a grant of land on the Juniata River. Finally, he drifted to Montours Island in the Allegheny River near Fort Pitt, where he died prior to 1775.

THE OLDEST CHURCH IN LYCOMING COUNTY

By BECKY KANE

Introduction

The Lycoming Presbyterian Church of Newberry has played a very significant role in the history of Williamsport. It is the oldest church in Lycoming County. The exact date of its founding is unknown, although there is reliable evidence to show that it was already in existence in 1786 because it was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Donegal Presbytery to the Carlisle Presbytery in that year.[1]

There is a probability that the missionary to the Indians, David Brainard. was at Lycoming Creek as early as 1746 because it is known that on July 25, 1746, he met and preached to the Indians at that point where the Sheshequin Path crosses Lycoming Creek.

On October 3, 1792, the first call of the Lycoming Presbyterian congregation was extended to the Reverend John Boyd, who later returned it unaccepted. On April 9, 1794, the Reverend Isaac Grier was ordained and installed as their first permanent pastor. He had just completed two years missionary labor in that area.

The original church was a crude log building. When or by whom it was built is unknown. The entrance was on the south side. Rough stairs led from the outside to the galleries at each end of the church. The interior had old-fashioned high pews and a corresponding high English or "wine glass" type pulpit from which was suspended a sounding board decorated with a large star.[2] No equipment for heating the church was provided. There were no fire-places or stoves and not even a chimney. People walked from Pennsdale, Trout Run, and Jersey Shore to worship in the house of God. Because they had to save their shoes, they wouldn't wear them until they got to the big bend in the railroad above Newberry where they would stop and put them on.[3]

The members of this old log church were mainly Scotch-Irish. Their ancestors were Scotts who settled in Ireland by edict of James I (1606-1625) of England. They were very dissatisfied in Ireland and endured much prosecution. In 1680 a great number of them left for America. Many came to Pennsylvania and pushed their way up the Susquehanna to unsettled lands. These Scotch-Irish were hardy, sturdy, and inured to hardships. They loved God and served him faithfully. Hating tyranny, they were truly Calvinistic in their beliefs, self reliant and able to cope with the danger and privations of the wilderness. It was because of these qualities that they reached their destination . . . only to find the territory disputed, claimed by both Indians and whites.

By the purchase of 1768 the Pennsylvania land extended westward to the Tiadaghton Creek. After this the Indians claimed the Lycoming to be the Tiadaghton Creek; the whites claimed that Pine Creek was the Tiadaghton. Because of the controversy and fearing bloodshed the Proprietors made the proclamation saying that no one could settle on this land.

These settlers had land grants and had paid cash for them so there seemed nothing to do but enter the land as "squatters", which they did. The first to enter was Joseph Haines, followed by the Kings, Carothers, Caldwells, Hughes, Mahaffeys, Suttons, Griers, Hagerman, Hays (my great, great grandparents), Updegraffs, and Toners. The names have been handed down from generation to generation in the church. The names of the charter members are not known.

In the treaty of 1784 at Fort Standwix, the Indians acknowledged that Pine Creek was the Tiadaghton Creek. The settlers proceeded therefore to stake their claims, and to apply for patents. The first patent was received by John Sutton, September 2, 1786, for 321 5/8A. In 1794 he had it surveyed and laid out into lots, streets, and alleys.[4]

The log church was destroyed by fire in May, 1817. The fire originated in Mr. Reynold's wagon makers shop on the east side of present day Arch Street. Mrs. Betsy Reynolds, who was a famous baker of home-made cakes and pies, on the day of the fire, had prepared a batch of ginger cakes and had gone to a funeral.

(Continued in next issue)

1. *Historic Lycoming Presbyterian Church,* p. 8.
2. *Historic Lycoming Presbyterian Church,* P. 8.
3. *Lycoming Presbyterian Church, Newberry,* p. 2.
4. *Lycoming Presbyterian* C#793 *berry, pp.* 1,2.

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